

# **Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks**

## **FY2016/17**

### **Goals and Objectives**

#### **Director's Office**

The Director's Office is responsible for overall department direction regarding policy, planning, program development, guidelines, and decision-making for key resource activities. Finances, legal services, human resources management, land administration, and information technology support are also administered here. The governor-appointed Fish and Wildlife Commission and the Parks and Recreation Board provide policy direction on resource management, seasons, and use of department lands.

#### **Goal: Agency Direction and Management**

*The Director's Office will manage, provide direction, and support department programs in an effective manner.*

##### **Agency Direction Objectives:**

- Increase efficiency, efficacy, and accountability of agency programs.
- Develop a shared vision for all department employees.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities for program management.
- Improve decision-making processes within the agency.
- Improve internal communication and coordination.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of FWP land holdings and acquisitions.

##### **Legal Advice and Defense Objectives:**

- Ensure that management decisions comply with applicable provisions of constitution, statutes, and rules.
- Defend challenges to department management decisions.

##### **Human Resources and Safety Objectives:**

- Consistently apply fair and usable pay components within budget constraints under the Broadband Pay Plan ensuring managers receive appropriate training.
- Enhance Return to Work Program through safety training within the field focused programs for all employees.

#### **Goal: Financial Management and Administration**

*The Administration Division will ensure a sound financial foundation for the agency.*

##### **Financial Objectives:**

- Increase fiscal accountability of agency programs.
- Ensure a sound financial foundation for the agency.
- Establish sustainable funding mechanisms for fish, wildlife, and parks management.
- Enhance the agency's auditing and internal control capabilities.

#### **Technology Objectives:**

- Develop and implement a radio communications program to ensure interoperability with state and local law enforcement entities and to heighten employee and public safety.
- Implement Mobile Computer terminals in enforcement vehicles that deliver criminal justice information and officer location, which will enhance officer safety and effectiveness.
- Enhance security and continuity of operations across all mission critical systems.
- Continued effective use of the technology base budget, with emphasis on improved services, increased efficiency, and maximum return on invested resources.
- Accomplish priority work through the use of centralized data and Geographic Information Systems (GIS), including education and outreach opportunities for FWP staff.
- Increase efficiencies in spatial data collection, storage, and use for FWP programs by assisting in the development of agency centralized data systems.
- Fully engage efforts to maintain and enhance FWP's GIS-based tools available to the general public.

#### **Licensing Objectives:**

- Conduct a comprehensive public process to improve the structure for hunting and fishing licenses and establish a sustainable funding system for fish and wildlife management.
- Develop efforts to increase revenues through the sale of all available licenses and by securing additional revenue streams.
- Develop efforts to license non-consumptive, parks, and other recreational users.
- Adapt the licensing platform to the changing needs of our customers.

#### **Centralized Support Objectives:**

- Ensure an efficient, innovative, and responsive procurement process.
- Improve fleet management through maintenance, cost analysis, enhanced software capabilities, and continual education.
- Conduct a physical inventory of all department assets bi-annually to ensure accountability and location of all equipment.
- Ensure adequate insurance coverage for all assets in accordance with risk exposure reporting.
- Create visual illustrations that better explain FWP programs and regulations.

**Goal: Public Awareness and Involvement**

*The Communications and Education Division will focus on programs to increase public awareness of FWP activities, understanding of FWP issues, and support for FWP efforts.*

**Objectives:**

- Continue improving an information/education program with the goal of raising the awareness of and minimizing impacts from aquatic invasive species, illegal introductions, and other threats and opportunities.
- Maintain and enhance expertise in human-wildlife conflict issues, especially in the area of bear/recreationist encounters.
- Increase efforts to serve and develop the support of non-consumptive constituents who also benefit from diverse and sustainable fish and wildlife populations and outdoor recreation in Montana.
- Engender informed public input based on complete and accurate information.
- Improve communications and relations among landowners/recreationists/FWP.
- Increase awareness of conservation, especially by non-consumptive users and the general public, in order to illustrate the role people play in restoring and caring for their environment.

**Goal: Recruitment and Retention of Hunters, Anglers, Recreationists**

*FWP will focus on communications, education, and regulatory considerations to retain existing participants and introduce new users to fishing, hunting, and outdoor park and recreation activities.*

**Objectives:**

- Evaluate the use of technology and social media as recruitment and retention tools.
- Develop a better understanding of the needs of customers to facilitate participation in hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation.
- Identify and address barriers to recruitment and retention of hunters, anglers, and other outdoor recreationists.

**Fisheries Division**

The Fisheries Division is responsible for the stewardship of Montana's fisheries and aquatic resources while contributing to the quality of life for present and future generations. Operational programs are in five bureaus (Hatchery, Fisheries Management, Habitat, Special Projects, and Operations) and seven regions. Primary functions of the Division include collection and analysis of fisheries data, establishing fishing regulations, habitat conservation and management, and maintaining sound fish populations and the opportunity to enjoy them.

**Goal: Habitat and Management**

*The Fisheries Division develops and implements plans to manage, conserve, and protect fish populations and communities, and it will identify priority aquatic habitats, in order to protect, restore and secure additional funding for their conservation.*

**Objectives:**

- Continue to promote access and protect habitat.
- Maintain emphasis on aquatic habitat protection and restoration.
- Continue to refine information and technology used to prioritize habitats.
- Work with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and others to correct dam-related habitat issues (e.g., fish passage, thermal pollution) in the lower Missouri and Yellowstone rivers to benefit Pallid sturgeon, paddlefish, sauger, and other native fish populations.
- Continue the development of the Aquatic Invasive Species program to prevent the introduction and spread of AIS in Montana.
- Develop and implement laws/rules to protect fisheries and aquatic resources from Aquatic Invasive Species and illegal introductions of fish and other aquatic organisms.
- Implement new ARM rule which describes actions the Department will take in response to the discovery of illegally introduced fish into public waters.
- Maintain and enhance the infrastructure of our Fish Hatchery System. Emphasize development of more cost effective water sources at Fort Peck Hatchery.

**Goal: Species of Concern**

*The Fisheries Division will emphasize priority species, including those affected by the Endangered Species Act, and develop new plans or implement existing plans and conservation strategies.*

**Objectives:**

- Continue habitat efforts to keep Arctic grayling off the Endangered Species list and continue efforts for delisting of bull trout and pallid and white sturgeon.
- Fully engage in ESA activities, including but not limited to evaluating and addressing threats that could lead to listing, participating in ESA processes to demonstrate that species are adequately managed or recovered, and participating in legal challenges to important ESA issues, such as bull trout delisting.
- Collect data on status and distribution of priority species that have been identified as species of concern, especially if little data is available.

**Goals: Data Assessment**

*The Fisheries Division will refine data collection and analysis efforts for use in internal planning and operations as well as external use, to enable the public to make informed land use decisions.*

**Objectives:**

- Evaluate and monitor natural resource damage events like the Yellowstone oil spill.

- Continue to develop environmental review processes for providing comments on land use proposals, including residential development, energy development, transportation development, and climate change and assess strategies for the evaluation and mitigation of the fragmentation caused by various land use activities.
- Continue to refine harvest management programs to make clear and explicit links between population monitoring parameters, population objectives, social expectations, and fishing season/regulation recommendations.
- Complete Fisheries Information System database, to include survey and inventory data, hatchery fish plants, angler pressure data, and fishing regulations.

### **Goal: Access to Public Waters**

*The Fisheries Division will work with landowners to provide access through private lands to improve opportunities to access public waters.*

#### **Objectives:**

- Enhance efforts to provide access to public waters.
- Work with constituent groups and landowners to encourage angling access through private lands.
- Maintain emphasis on providing public angler access via FAS and other programs.

## **Wildlife Division**

The Wildlife Division is responsible for the conservation and management of Montana's 600+ birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians and their habitat. Activities related to the Wildlife Program include coordination and planning, monitoring the status of wildlife and habitats, conserving and enhancing wildlife habitat, and providing opportunity for public enjoyment of wildlife through hunting, trapping, and viewing. The program manages animals legislatively categorized as big game, nongame wildlife, migratory game birds, upland game, furbearers, and threatened and endangered species.

### **Goal: Habitat Conservation**

*The Wildlife Division will identify priority habitats, including large or threatened landscapes, and work to secure additional funding for their conservation.*

#### **Objectives:**

- Identify highest priority habitats and specific parcels for conservation using GIS modeling of vegetation type, biodiversity importance, relative conservation value to specific species, migratory corridors, etc. Focus efforts on Sagebrush-Steppe habitat to preclude ESA listing of sage grouse.
- Increase emphasis on maintaining and protecting highest priority habitat at an ecosystem level to comprehensively conserve all of Montana's wildlife.

- Leverage Habitat Montana with other federal and non-government programs to better meet the mission of the department to manage all wildlife.
- Maintain Division properties (WMAs) to meet the intent of the Good Neighbor Policy.
- Work through Farm Bill policies and with USDA agencies to conserve privately-owned habitat.
- Provide direction and resources to local governments to ensure wildlife needs are addressed in planning and development. Work with local governments to influence patterns and methods of rural subdivision in a way that minimizes impacts to wildlife communities.

## **Goal: Wildlife Management**

*The Wildlife Division will monitor and manage game populations to comply with management plans and objectives in a manner that is cost effective, efficient, and transparent.*

### **Objectives:**

- Refine harvest management programs to strengthen links between population monitoring parameters, population objectives, social expectations, and hunting season recommendations; focus population management prescriptions on the 5-week general gun season and simplify regulations.
- Develop survey and inventory protocols for big game species to maximize sampling efficiency, consistency, and robustness. Enhance population surveys to meet management objectives via efficiency and protocol standards.
- Evaluate furbearer program components and make necessary changes to ensure contemporary, science-based management of furbearer species.
- Identify, prioritize and implement research to address management needs; apply research findings to management recommendations.
- Complete statewide analysis for the potential for bison to exist as wildlife in Montana.
- Implement species management plans per plan goals and objectives.
- Enhance distribution of elk to optimize available public land habitats.
- Maintain trapping as a management tool.
- Increase communication and enhance relationships with landowners.

## **Goal: Species of Concern**

*The Wildlife Division will emphasize priority species, including those affected by the Endangered Species Act, and develop new plans or implement existing plans and conservation strategies.*

### **Objectives:**

- Maintain or restore state authority to manage wildlife species in Montana (e.g., recover ESA listed species and prevent the need to list state-managed species). Fully engage in ESA activities, including but not limited to evaluating and addressing threats that could lead to listing, participating in ESA processes to

- demonstrate that species are adequately managed or recovered, and participating in legal challenges to important ESA issues, such as grizzly bear delisting.
- Integrate game and nongame programs to manage more comprehensively; implement the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) and move forward with the implementation of priority strategies for identified species and their related habitats.
  - Collect data on status and distribution of priority species that have been identified as species of concern, especially if little data is available.
  - Continue efforts to keep sage grouse off the Endangered Species list and continue efforts for delisting of grizzly bears and lynx.

### **Goal: Hunting Access**

*The Wildlife Division will refine existing programs and develop new programs to secure public hunting access to private lands from willing landowners, and improve opportunities to access public lands.*

#### **Objectives:**

- Review all department access programs and develop strategies in conjunction with PL/PW to enhance access programs to ensure access on private and public lands.
- Evaluate and develop new access tools that incorporate changes in landownership from traditional agricultural ownership to nontraditional recreational ownership.
- Complete a comprehensive hunter access plan.
- Enhance efforts to provide access to landlocked public lands.
- Enhance efforts to mark boundaries of state lands.

### **Goal: Wildlife Conflict**

*The Wildlife Division will implement measures to reduce potential for conflict with wildlife, and will respond to wildlife conflict to protect public safety.*

#### **Objectives:**

- Develop and implement public outreach efforts to provide information to the public to help reduce wildlife conflicts that require response by staff.
- Respond to wildlife conflicts that present a threat to human health and safety.
- Provide technical and material assistance to private landowners who are experiencing game damage problems using the suite of tools available.
- Develop a wildlife health program to proactively address wildlife diseases that represent a potential threat to wildlife populations, humans, or livestock.
- Continue risk management efforts to minimize potential for spread of brucellosis between wildlife and livestock; continue brucellosis surveillance and research efforts.

## **Parks Division**

The Parks Division (Montana State Parks) is responsible for conserving scenic, historic, archaeological, scientific, and recreational resources of the state, and providing for their use and enjoyment. The Division manages state parks and administers recreation programs for the benefit of citizens of Montanans and their guests for current and future generations. With the approval of the Montana State Parks and Recreation Board, the division will implement items identified in the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, as well as new strategic plan direction, which focuses on building sustainable funding, strategic partnerships, and engaging constituents in a manner that is transparent and supportive of the state park system. Park programs will be significant, relevant, and assure accessibility. Objectives listed below highlight the highest of the division's priorities.

### **Goal: Service**

*The Parks Division will provide high quality services to State Park visitors and recreationists, provide strong and efficient program leadership to local Montana communities and agencies via education and grants programs, and provide camping, interpretive, and other recreational opportunities across Montana.*

#### **State Parks Objectives:**

- Implement direction from the strategic plan to improve relevance of state parks through enhanced programs and services.
- Improve communication with park visitors relating to infrastructure improvements, interpretive programs, historic resource management, and overall customer involvement through use of the internet and direct interaction with community leaders, non-profits, and citizens.
- Develop facilities to enhance disabled and elderly access where appropriate.
- Work with other agencies to support integrated approaches to meeting the mission of state parks and adjacent communities.

#### **Recreation Program Objectives:**

- Provide high-quality customer service to all grant sponsors. Ensure clear, professional, and proactive communications occur from staff.
- Reorganize advisory committees to expand their use in helping to improve grants, recreation opportunity and safety statewide.
- Work with nonprofits as well as local and federal agency partners to improve recreation management through strategic collaboration.

### **Goal: Stewardship**

*The Parks Division will promote stewardship of natural, cultural, paleontological and recreational resources for current and future generations.*

#### **State Parks Objectives:**

- Implement the strategic plan to address real property ownership by transferring at least one park property to city government to better align management with ownership.



- Work within the department to address encumbrances on park lands originally acquired through fish and wildlife resources.
- Complete development on the first phase of the Milltown site as a day-use state park east of Missoula.
- Update and improve state park regulations and policies pertinent to the protection of park resources, public safety, and use.
- Complete facilities condition reviews of state park infrastructure to improve effectiveness of management and address the maintenance backlog.
- Aggressively apply best practices for control of terrestrial noxious weeds and prevent aquatic invasive species.
- Hold field schools at three parks over the next two years to improve knowledge and significance of parks with a goal to transferring that knowledge to Montana's youth through outdoor and cultural education programs.
- Work to achieve National Historic Landmark status for at least one state park.

**Recreation Program Objectives:**

- Ensure that the processes and procedures for effectively administering various grant programs are continually reviewed and improved within *grants.gov*.
- Implement the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).
- Provide advice and planning support to communities, tribes, agencies and not-for-profits in providing recreation opportunities throughout Montana.

**Goal: Sustainability**

*The Parks Division will strive to enhance the long-term sustainability of the State Park System and maintain recreation opportunities in a manner that promotes long term resource conservation fiscally and operationally.*

**State Parks Objectives:**

- Consistent with the strategic plan, secure long-term funding and staffing to sustain the state parks system's new and existing areas.
- Monitor use and improved processes from implementation of the "Store Manager" program for enhanced cash handling and tracking programs through staff training and support in 2015.
- Monitor and maintain all funding sources, especially the vehicle registration funding system, to assure consistent funding; work with county treasurers and others to support communication about the program.
- Effectively implement the expanded AmeriCorps program as part of integrating parks into communities, increased volunteerism, and expanding local significance and special events.
- Integrate a maintenance management system into capital and operations programs management to enhance long term functionality of park infrastructure through improved monitoring and cost management.
- Pursue a statutory change to increase the contract term in state parks from 7 years to 20 years, per board direction.

- Expand opportunities for jobs in state parks through additional concession opportunities and private equity investment while expanding services for visitors.
- Continue to provide a positive impact to Montana's general economy and tourism-based industries.

**Recreation Program Objectives:**

- With authorization from the executive, work with other stakeholders to advocate for and maintain funding for diverse programs like recreational trails and Land and Water Conservation Fund to sustain program benefits everywhere, including expanded consideration of funding for state recreation grant programs.
- Work with communities to help reinforce awareness and understanding of recreation to help address health and quality of life issues throughout Montana, including small program needs such as ball fields, swimming pools, etc.
- Explore and help build partnerships to expand recreation opportunity and management where supported locally and needed generally.

**Goal: Safety**

*The Parks Division will provide for public safety and reduced exposure to liability by improving management practices, critical incident responses, hazard reductions, and improving visitor experiences.*

**State Parks Objectives:**

- Enhance and integrate safety and service by continuing to mature the public safety program while providing an integrated, preventative enforcement presence that supports customer service and return visitation.
- Address forestry issues such as diseased or hazard trees statewide, as well as reducing potential fire danger in areas that may threaten adjacent lands.
- Continue to investigate workplace accidents and minimize claims as a means of providing a safe workplace and managing risk exposure overall.

**Recreation Program Objectives:**

- Expand the use of the OHV safety simulator through utilization of volunteers to help in further promoting safe and ethical use of OHV's and snowmobiles.
- Enhance safety and ethics training for motorized and non-motorized users to reduce conflict, promote compatibility, and improve resource stewardship using programs such as Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly, especially in the OHV and snowmobile programs.
- Integrate and enhance recreation program management with division field staff involvement outside of state park boundaries to help clubs, user groups, counties, communities, and federal agency partners in administering safe programs.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION**

The Law Enforcement Division enforces all Montana fish, wildlife, parks and recreation laws, department and Commission rules, and regulations. Division personnel enforce state boating, water safety, snowmobile and Off Road Vehicle rules and regulations as well as private property laws and regulations as they relate to public recreation. The Division's efforts are inextricably woven into working with hunters, anglers, state park users, the general public, private landowners, state and federal resource agencies in order to optimize access and recreational opportunities, address the needs of private landowners who allow public recreational access, and promote recreational ethics. Additionally, Division staff engages in numerous non-enforcement duties such as tagging and trophying wildlife, hunter education, recreational access initiatives, and responding to urban wildlife and human-wildlife conflict incidents.

## **Goal: Resource Protection and Enhancement**

*The Enforcement Division will ensure regulation compliance and public safety as essential components of resource management.*

### **Wildlife Objectives**

- Enforce wildlife laws and regulations; maintain a visible presence of law enforcement.
- Emphasize working with landowners on landowner-agency relationships, public access, and game management principles.
- Through efforts by both uniformed wardens and the Criminal Investigations Section, continue focused efforts to identify and deter large-scale trophy poaching and illicit commercialization of Montana's wildlife resources.
- Provide support to the Attorney General's office for the prosecution of cases resulting from investigations.
- Enact and continue regulation compliance that focuses on improving landowner relations and population protection by responding to landowner issues in a timely fashion.
- Work with Board of Outfitters and other agencies to reduce the practice of unlicensed outfitting and the resulting resource damage these activities incur.
- Respond in a timely and legal fashion to landowner complaints of wildlife damage to property.

### **Fisheries Objectives**

- Enforce fishing laws and regulations and increase visibility of enforcement during high use periods.
- Emphasize practical regulation simplification for ease of understanding and compliance by anglers.
- Develop and implement specialized techniques to enhance compliance and strategies to deter, detect and investigate illegal introductions of fish species into public and private waters.
- Support Aquatic Invasive Species activities through an enforcement presence at AIS check stations and follow-up investigations and citations.

- Maintain enforcement response, patrol and administrative services to Fishing Access Site program (FAS) sites to address fee compliance, site vandalism, river recreation issues, and other user conflicts.

### **Water Safety, Snowmobile and Off Highway Vehicle Enforcement and Education Objectives**

- Maintain a visible field presence on waterways and in areas where motorized recreation occurs.
- Acquire and maintain the highest level of training in the use of equipment as well as individual public safety skills (cold water rescue, search and rescue, etc.)
- Participate in water, snowmobile and OHV education and safety presentations.
- Strive for an acceptable level of compliance of water safety, OHV and snowmobile rules and laws.

### **Parks and Recreation Objectives**

- Remain an integral component of the operation of parks and general recreation activities on department owned and managed properties throughout the state.
- Continue to work with Montana State Parks to develop and maintain an acceptable level of compliance of state park rules and regulations.
- Maintain a Parks presence to support non-enforcement staff.
- Develop, foster and maintain positive working relationships with local Parks staff.
- Continue to respond to unlawful activities such as vandalism and resource abuse in state parks and department owned and managed properties.
- Provide a law enforcement presence, particularly at high use times, at Wildlife Management Areas and other department properties.

## **Goal: Recruitment and Retention of Enforcement Personnel**

*The Enforcement Division will recruit, select, train and retain a dedicated, competent staff, while always maintaining current training and skills competencies.*

### **Objectives:**

- Continue requiring the highest academic and personal standards for qualification to serve as a Montana Game Warden.
- Maintain a rigorous selection system to ensure staffing needs are filled by the best qualified and most competent personnel.
- Maintain the FTO Program as a means of assimilating new employees into the ranks of the division with the highest level of professionalism, preparedness, and knowledge of agency values and the criminal justice system.
- Encourage and support advanced training in both law enforcement and other skills requisite to the work of wardens.
- Work with POST and other law enforcement standards organizations to ensure wardens are current and compliant with the legal requirements of their jobs.
- Continue to work on a pay progression model incorporating competitive salary ranges.

## **Goal: Encourage and Maintain Good Landowner-Sportsman Relations**

*The Enforcement Division personnel will encourage activities that foster positive and productive relations between private landowners and the recreating public.*

### **Objectives:**

- Remain actively involved in season setting processes to provide insight and input, and better enable reasonable, clear and enforceable regulations.
- Continue working toward practical regulation simplification for ease of understanding and compliance by anglers, hunters, and trappers.
- Maintain landowner contacts as a priority activity of game wardens.
- Maintain involvement and efforts in Block Management, Unlocking State Lands and other initiatives to broaden hunter access opportunities.
- Maintain efforts to clarify and improve regulations for disabled hunters and those holding permits to hunt from a vehicle.
- Regularly participate in meetings and presentations to varied audiences, to underscore basic tenets of landowner-sportsman relations.
- Emphasize hunter ethics and the importance of fair chase, respect for private property, and compliance with resource laws and regulations.
- Work in cooperation with the Communication/Education Division to help reduce landowner concerns about hunter behavior and ethics.
- Act as advocates on behalf of recreational access by participating in activities that will both provide access and resolve use issues.